

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JERUSA 00477 211227Z

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FROM ATHERTON, U.S. DEL NO. 1

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, XF, UK, US

SUBJECT: BRIEFING OF BRITISH ON MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS

1. IN RESPONSE TO BRITISH REQUEST STERNER STOPPED OFF
IN LONDON TO BRIEF BRITISH ON CURRENT STATUS OF EACE
EFFORTS AND OBJECTIVES OF ATHERTON MISSION. BRITISH
PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS TO BE BROUGHT UP TO DATE IN VIEW
OF KING HUSSEIN'S CURRENT PRESENCE IN LONDON AND
OWEN'S TRIP TO JORDAN AND ISRAEL NEXT WEEK.

2. STERNER, ACCCOMPANIED BY KINSOLVING, SPENT HOUR AND HALF WITH
MICHAEL WEIR AND HIS FCO MIDDLE EAST COLLEAGUES FEBRUARY 20.
HE SAID PRIMARY GOAL OF ATHERTON MISSION WAS TO MAKE
PROGRESS TOWARD AGREEMENT ON DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES
AND DESCRIBED IN SOME DETAIL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TWO
SIDES ON LANGUAGE IN PARAGRAPH ON PALESTINIANS.
LATEST EGYPTIAN FORMULATION WHICH HAD BEEN GIVEN
ATHERTON ON HIS LAST TRIP HAD YET TO BE CONVEYED TO
ISRAELIS, AND IN ADDITION MOST RECENT WORD FROM
SADAT WAS THAT HE WISHED TO REVIEW EGYPTIAN
LANGUAGE IN LIGHT OF HIS TALKS IN WASHINGTON.
SADAT HAD MADE IT CLEAR IN WASHINGTON THAT HE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 JERUSA 00477 211227Z

CONTINUED TO VIEW DECLARATION AS THE ESSENTIAL
FIRST STEP AND HAD ASKED US TO CONTINUE WORK
ON IT. STERNER SAID IT WAS BEGINNING TO BE
CLEAR SOMETHING CLOSE TO OUR ASWAN FORMULA
WAS ONLY LIKELY COMPROMISE.

3. WEIR ASKED WHETHER SADAT THOUGHT WHAT WE

HAD IN MIND FOR LANGUAGE ON PALESTINIANS, EVEN IF ISRAELIS COULD BE BROUGHT TO ACCEPT IT, WOULD BE ENOUGH TO BRING HUSSEIN INTO NEGOTIATIONS. STERNER SAID SADAT SEEMED TO HAVE REALISTIC ESTIMATE OF HUSSEIN'S CURRENT ATTITUDE AND REALIZED IT MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH. WOULD SADAT NEVRTHELESS PROCEED WITH BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES? STERNER SAID WE HAVE NO CERTAIN ANSWERS TO THIS. PERHAPS SADAT HIMSELF HAD NOT DECIDED FIRMLY IN HIS OWN MIND AT WHAT POINT A REASONABLE BASIS WOULD HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED TO JUSTIFY HUSSEIN AND THE OTHER PARTIES TO JOIN AND FOR HIM TO PROCEED ON HIS OWN IF THE OTHERS REFUSED. PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY HAD PROBED THIS POINT WITH SADAT BUT WE HAD RECEIVED NO DEFINITIVE ANSWERS. FOR THE TIME BEING, HOWEVER, IT WAS CLEAR SADAT SAW JORDAN ENTERING THE NEGOTIATIONS AS HIGHLY DESIRABLE OBJECTIVE.

4. WEIR ASKED OUR READING OF HUSSEIN'S CURRENT POSITION. STERNER SAID HUSSEIN HAD RATHER DEPRESSED OUTLOOK ON CURRENT PEACE PROSPECTS AND WAS ATTACHING NUMBER OF UN-REASONABLE PRECONDITIONS TO JOINING POLITICAL COMMITTEE NEGOTIAIONS. IT WAS ONE OF ATHERTON'S

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 JERUSA 00477 211227Z

PURPOSES IN VISITING JORDAN TO TRY TO GET HIM IN MORE POSITIVE FRAME OF MIND AND POINT OUT THAT IT WAS NOT REALISTIC TO EXPECT ISRAEL TO AGREE TO THE KIND OF FAR-REACHING OBJECTIVES HE WAS TALKING ABOUT AS PRECONDITIONS FOR HIS ENTRY INTO NEGOTIATIONS. WEIR SAID THEY HAD REPORT IN THEIR INTELLIGENCE CHANNELS WHICH DESCRIBED HUSSEIN'S CURRENT MOOD AS "DESPAIRING." STERNER SAID WE ALSO HAD IMPRESSION HE HAD GONE INTO SOMETHING OF A FUNK LATELY AND IT WOULD BE HELPFUL, IN TALKS BRITISH WOULD HAVE WITH HIM IN LONDON AND AMMAN, IF THEY COULD REINFORCE SOME OF THE THEMES WE WOULD ALSO BE USING WITH HIM.

5. WEIR ASKED ABOUT THE STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS ON THE WEST BANK/GAZA PROBLEM. STERNER SAID THAT IF IMPASSE WAS TO BE AVOIDED ON DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO ENGAGE THE PARTIES (INCLUDING HUSSEIN) IN A DISCUSSION OF CONCRETE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TWO TERRITORIES. THIS WOULD NOT BE EASY SINCE BOTH EGYPTIANS AND ISRAELIS HAD THEIR OWN REASONS FOR WANTING

TO DEFER DISCUSSION OF THIS PROBLEM. ATHERTON
WOULD BE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH THREE THINGS: (A) TO
GET THE ISRAELIS TO BEGIN TO THINK IN CONCRETE TERMS
OF HOW THE BEGIN PLAN COULD BE MODIFIED TO MAKE
IT MORE ACCEPTABLE TO ARABS; (B) ELICIT EGYPT'S
IDEAS IN WRITING IF POSSIBLE ABOUT ARRANGEMENTS
IN THE WEST BANK/GAZA; AND (C) TRY TO DETERMINE WHAT
HUSSEIN WOULD CONSIDER AS REASONABLE BASIS IN
TERMS OF WEST BANK/GAZA PLAN FOR JOINING NEGOTIATIONS.

6. WEIR ASKED ABOUT OUR OWN THOUGHTS FOR ARRANGEMENTS
IN WEST BANK/GAZA THAT MIGHT PROVE WORKABLE. STERNER
SAID WE WERE THINKING IN TERMS OF AN INTERIM
REGIME FOR TRANSITIONAL PERIOD THAT WOULD PROVIDE FOR
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 JERUSA 00477 211227Z

PROCESS BY WHICH FINAL ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE
NEGOTIATED BUT NOT ATTEMPT TO SOLVE THESE IN THE
INITIAL NEGOTIATIONS. BROAD FEATURES OF SUCH A REGIME
MIGHT BE THAT ITS AUTHORITY DERIVED FROM AGREEMENT
AMONG THE PARTIES TO THE INITIAL AGREEMENT (WHICH
WOULD INCLUDE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES), AND
NOT FROM ISRAEL ALONE; THAT PALESTINIAN
RESIDENTS WOULD HAVE SUBSTANTIAL MEASURE OF SELF-
RULE; THAT ISRAEL WOULD RETAIN AUTHORITY FOR OVERALL
SECURITY OF AREA DURING THIS PERIOD; AND THAT THE
PARTIES, INCLUDING ISRAEL AS WELL AS ELECTED
PALESTINIAN RESIDENTS OF WEST BANK AND GAZA, WOULD
NEGOTIATE CHOICE OF FINAL ARRANGEMENTS UPON WHICH
RESIDENTS OF TERRITORIES COULD EVENTUALLY EXPRESS
THEMSELVES. STERNER ASKED BRITISH TO HOLD THESE
IDEAS IN CLOSE CONFIDENCE FOR TIME BEING AS WE HAD
NOT YET DISCUSSED THEM WITH ALL THE PARTIES.

7. WEIR ASKED IF WE EXPECTED TO ACHIEVE BREAKTHROUGH
ON THESE ISSUES DURING ATHERTON VISIT. STERNER
SAID THIS MIGHT NOT BE POSSIBLE, BUT SECRETARY
HAD GIVEN ATHERTON MANDATE TO PUSH AHEAD AS RAPIDLY AS
HE COULD. IF WE COULD NOT GET GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED
TO MAKE NECESSARY DECISIONS WE AT LEAST INTENDED TO
MAKE IT CLEAR WHAT WE BELIEVED THOSE DECISIONS WOULD
HAVE TO BE IF PEACE PROCESS WAS TO BE KEPT ALIVE.

8. DEPARTMENT PASS CAIRO, TEL AVIV, DAMASCUS, AMMAN,
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